

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-5 and 7-31 are pending, of which Claims 1-4 and 9-31 have been withdrawn from consideration.

**Response to Claim Rejections Under § 103**

Claims 5, 7 and 8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0122134 to Weydert et al. Applicants respectfully traverse.

The present claims are directed to a rubber composition comprising a modified natural rubber, which is obtained by graft-polymerizing natural rubber latex with a polar group-containing monomer and then coagulating and drying, and carbon black and/or silica, wherein a grafting ratio of the polar group-containing monomer is 0.01-5.0% by mass per the natural rubber latex, and a content of the modified natural rubber component of the rubber composition is at least 15% by mass.

Weydert discloses a rubber component comprising a rubber gel, wherein the rubber gel is defined as a polybutadiene gel, styrene butadiene gel, acrylonitrile-butadiene gel, chloroprene gel and natural rubber gel. *See*, paragraph [0014]. However, Weydert does not disclose or suggest that the grafting ratio of the polar group-containing monomer is 0.01-5.0% by mass per the natural rubber latex and the content of the modified natural rubber in the rubber component of the rubber composition is at least 15% by mass.

Applicants disclose at paragraph [0050] of the present specification, that when the grafting ratio exceeds 5% by mass, the physical properties inherent to natural rubber

(viscoelasticity, stress-strain curve in a tensile test or the like) are largely changed and deteriorated.

In this regard, as demonstrated in the additional Rule 132 Declaration by Ms. Yonemoto, attached, when the grafting ratio exceeds 5% by mass, the ultimate strength (fracture resistance) is largely deteriorated. Ms. Yonemoto's Rule 132 Declaration further demonstrates that these unexpected results can be obtained using various modified natural rubbers, i.e., N,N-diethylaminoethyl methacrylate, 2-hydroxyethyl methacrylate, acrylonitrile, and 2-vinylpyridine. Thus, the showing of unexpected results is commensurate in scope with the present claim 5.

Accordingly, Weydert fails to render obvious the present claims. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

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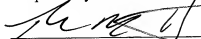
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CUSTOMER NUMBER

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Respectfully submitted,



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